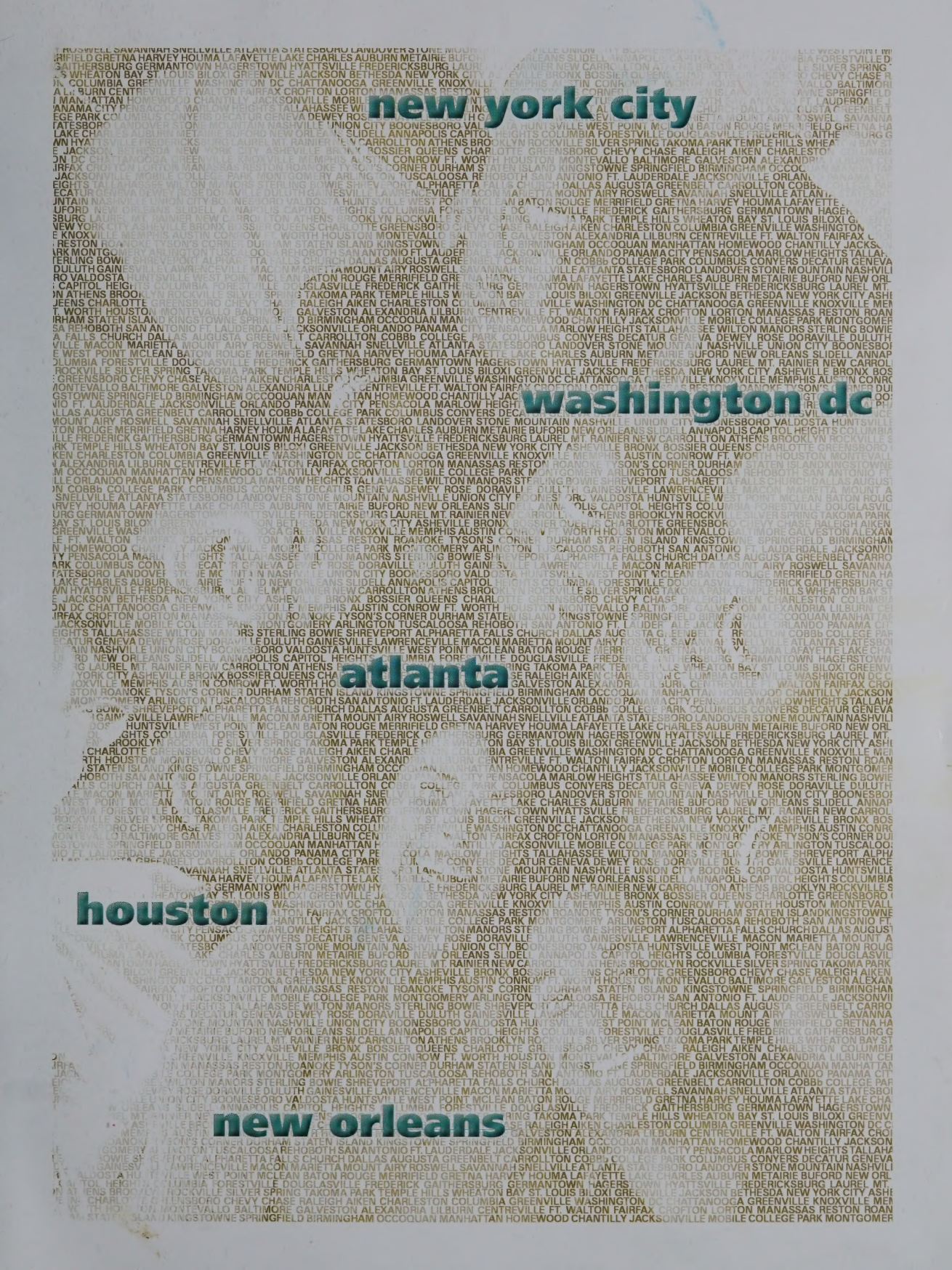
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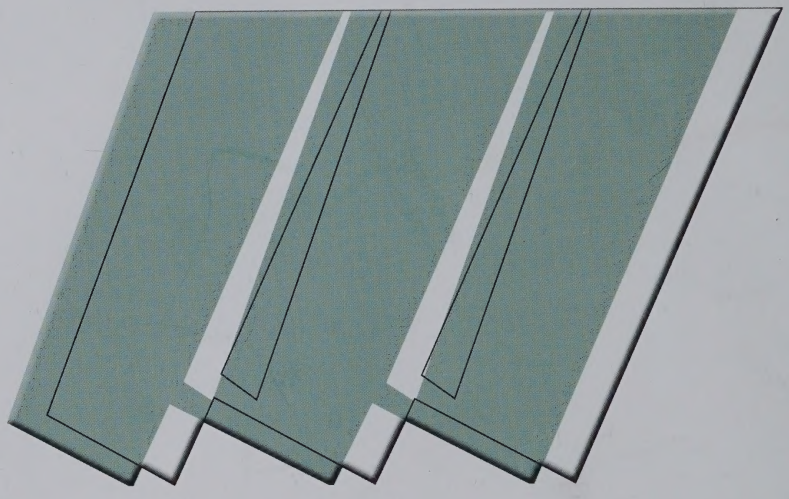

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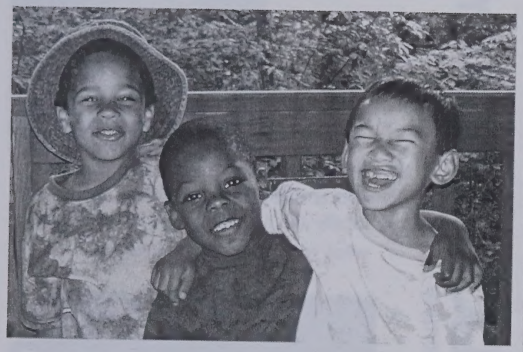


MEMBERSHIP

- ∇ Family Pride of the South is headquartered in Atlanta, Georgia, but we currently serve families from all over the south.
- ∇ We welcome new families to join our group, attend our activities, and get involved. We use a Yahoo email list to keep folks updated on our activities and events.
- ∇ We do not charge membership fees.
- ∇ We hold periodic fundraisers and happily accept tax-deductible donations.

HISTORY

FamilyPride of the South was founded as Atlanta FamilyPride by Lisa Prince and Deidre McCalla in July, 2001.

Photo by Irene Young

GET INVOLVED

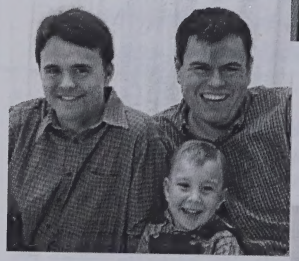
- ∇ We are a grassroots, nonprofit organization so we can always use help!
- ∇ We have four volunteer committees:
  - Educational Programming
  - Community Resources/Support
  - Public Advocacy
  - Social Activities
- ∇ Please consider making a donation of time and/or money to show your support for the work of our organization and help us reach ore families.

To become a member of our group, to get more information on FamilyPride of the South, or to make a donation, please contact:

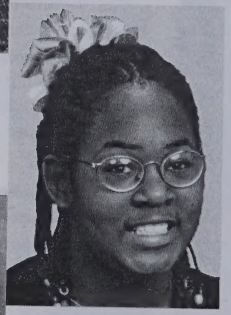
Lisa Prince, M.Ed.
Executive Director
(770) 640-1915
info@familypridesouth.org
www.familypridesouth.org
Yahoo group is located at
http://groups.yahoo.com/group/familypridesouth
3705 New Macland Rd
#200/381
Powder Springs, GA 30127

FamilyPride of the South

Community Resources & Support



Educational Programming



Public Advocacy

Social Activities

FamilyPride of the South is inclusive of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender parents and their children.

FamilyPride of the South

The mission of FamilyPride of the South is to advance the well-being of LGBT parents and their children. FamilyPride of the South strives to build strong families through educational programming, community resources & support, social activities, and public advocacy.

EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMMING

Adults

- Growing Your Family Workshops- Learn more about the emotional and legal aspects of alternative insemination, adoption, co-parenting and surrogacy
- Support Group for Prospective Parents
- Coming Out to Your Kids Workshops- get support and resources for talking to your kids about being lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender

Children

- Empowerment Workshops for Children Being Raised by LGBT Parents
- Social/Support Group for Teens Being Raised by LGBT Parents

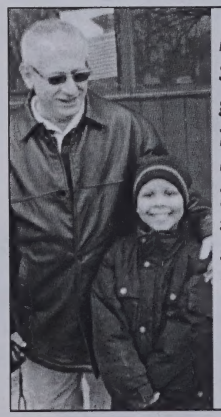
FamilyPride of the South teen group is a friendly, safe group where you meet other people who have parents like yours - we talk and play board games in a friendly, safe, and confidential environment.

Bobby M.

COMMUNITY RESOURCES & SUPPORT

- Web site with calendar updates & links to community resources such as LGBT family-friendly therapists, lawyers, adoption agencies, and physicians
- Active FamilyPride of the South Yahoo list serves as our primary means of communication

Check us out online at www.familypridesouth.org



FamilyPride of the South has been great for our family! We've made many new friends and our son really enjoys spending time with other families like ours.

Steve G.

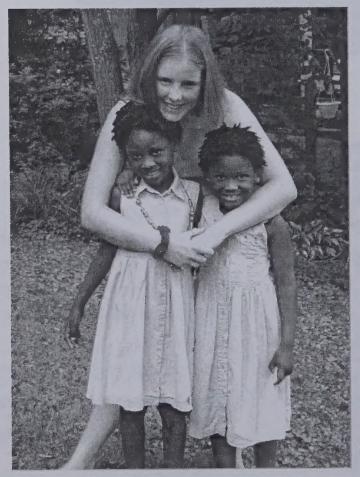
SOCIAL ACTIVITIES

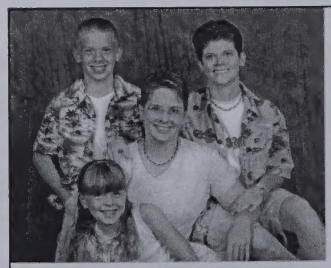
Activities for the Whole Family

- Monthly Bowling & Skating Events
- Spring Fling
- Annual Summer Picnic
- Atlanta Pride Festival Float
- Pride Booth & Children's Activities
- Annual Halloween Party
- Family Travel/Camping
- Kids' Play Groups
- Stay-at-Home Parent & Baby Groups

PUBLIC ADVOCACY

- We keep you updated about legislative efforts that affect our families, both locally and nationally, and let you know what you can do to get involved.





I love meeting other lesbian moms, talking, and sharing ideas. My children love going to the events because they are free to be themselves. I've really enjoyed this group, and am glad that my children are exposed to other diverse, positive, loving families....like us.

Kim W.

ZAMI

Atlanta's Premiere Organization
for Lesbians of African Descent

Mary Anne Adams
Executive Director

The ZAMI Line:
404 370-0920

The Audre Lorde
Scholarship Fund:
404 370-0911

www.zami.org • zami@zami.org

ZAMI, Inc. P.O. Box 2502
Decatur, GA 30031

1075 Zonolite Road, Suite 1-D
Atlanta, GA 30306
404-876-1819 ext. 24
fax 404-876-2709
e-mail: bgunby@sovo.com
www.sovo.com

BOB GUNBY
sales director

ATLANTA Gay&Lesbian
CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

2004 CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Fourth Friday Networking Event
Friday, March 26, 2004; 5:30 p.m. – 7:30 p.m.
Einstein's Restaurant

Join our members as we network with our co-sponsor, the Atlanta Executive Network. Admission is $10 which includes one drink and light appetizers. **Mark your calendar as these events will take place around Atlanta on the fourth Friday of every month.**

April Monthly Meeting
Wednesday, April 14, 2004; 7:45 a.m. – 9:30 a.m.
Mary Mac's Restaurant

Life Management – Accomplishing the Goals in Your Business and Your Life presented by Linda Zuk. During this presentation, Linda will talk about ways to get control of your time and your life and how to stop sabotaging yourself when it comes to scheduling your time.

Fourth Friday Networking Event
Friday, April 23, 2004; 5:30 p.m. – 7:30 p.m.
Location TBD

May Monthly Meeting
Wednesday, May 12, 2004; 6:00 p.m.
Location TBD
Sponsored by AAA Travel

Fourth Friday Networking Event
Friday, May 28, 2004; 5:30 p.m. – 7:30 p.m.
Location TBD

June Monthly Meeting
Wednesday, June 16, 2004; Reception at 7:00 p.m. – Performance at 8:00 p.m.
"La Cage aux Folles" at the Neighborhood Playhouse of Decatur

PMB 190 • 2103 N. Decatur Road • Decatur, Georgia 30033-5305 • (404) 377-4258 • atlantagaychamber.org

GLBT Executive Director Council
Friday, March 26, 2004
11:00 am – 2:00 pm

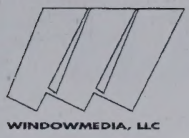
The formation of this group came out of speaking with several Executive Director's and how important and helpful it would be if we could all meet together on a regular basis and talk about networking, partnerships of our groups, executive director issues and just all around sharing of ideas and working closer together to strengthen our organizations.

Proposed Agenda:

- Welcome & Introductions
- Brief overview of our organizations & structure
- Executive Director medical insurance plans – what plan do you have and suggest
- Office logistics (best deals for Phone service, DSL, Printing, etc.)
- Upcoming organization major events & joint partnerships
- Open networking discussion
- Our next meeting date/time/location
- Southern Voice – media coverage and media sponsorships for our organizations presented by Matt Hennie, Editor in Chief, Southern Voice

Attendees:

AEN – Glen Paul Freedman
Atlanta Gay and Lesbian Chamber of Commerce – Scott Eaves
Atlanta Gay Men's Chorus – Ken Anderson
Atlanta Lesbian Cancer Initiative – Linda Ellis
Atlanta Pride Committee – Donna Narducci
FamilyPride of the South – Lisa Prince
Georgia Equality – Allen Thornell
Lambda Legal – Hector Vargas
YouthPride – Edward Gray
ZAMI – Mary Anne Adams



Window Media
Sponsorship Request Form

Window Media offers a 15 percent discount on all advertisements for non-profit organizations. Please complete this form only if you are seeking an in-kind contribution beyond the non-profit discount. If the application is approved, Window Media will make an in-kind contribution for the advertising space only. Please allow at least four weeks for review of application.

Organization Name: _____

Address: _____

_____

_____

Contact Name: _____

Telephone: _____ Fax: _____

E-mail Address: _____

Organization/Event Web Page (If available): _____

Organization/Event Budget: _____

Portion of Annual Budget
Earmarked for Advertising/Promotions (dollar amount): _____

Date(s) of Event: _____

Event/Description of Sponsorship Opportunity:

Please list other sponsors and their levels:

Groups that have or will benefit from your event, as well as amounts given to them (if any):

Window Media
Sponsorship Request Form

What do you request from Window Media (in terms of number of advertisements, size, frequency and color requirements)?

What will Window Media receive as a part of the sponsorship package (in terms of logo placement, recognition, speaker opportunity, *Southern Voice* logo link on your organization Web page, etc.)?

Please attach a copy of your most recent IRS 990 report and a current financial statement, as well as a list of the organization's officers and board of directors. Return completed application to:

Southern Voice
1075 Zonolite Road, Suite 1-D
Atlanta, GA 30306
(Fax) 404.876.2709

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Window Media Advertising Sales Rep: _____

FamilyPride of the South

An Organization Supporting Lesbian, Gay, Bi and Transgender Families

1st Annual Spring Fling: A Celebration of Families Saturday, April 17, 2004 1 - 4pm

Moonwalk, games, storytelling by McKenzie Wren, FamilyPride of the South teen group Not-So-Talented Talent Show, silent auction, and food for all!

Special Guest Appearance by Rep. Karla Drenner

Central Congregational Church
2676 Clairmont Rd, Atlanta

$10 per adult/ $5 per child 12 and under/ children under 3 free
entry fee includes food and all activities
For further information visit www.familypridesouth.org,
email events@familypridesouth.org or call (770) 640-1915

r family vacations {1-866-r-fam-vac}

Thank you to our corporate sponsors!

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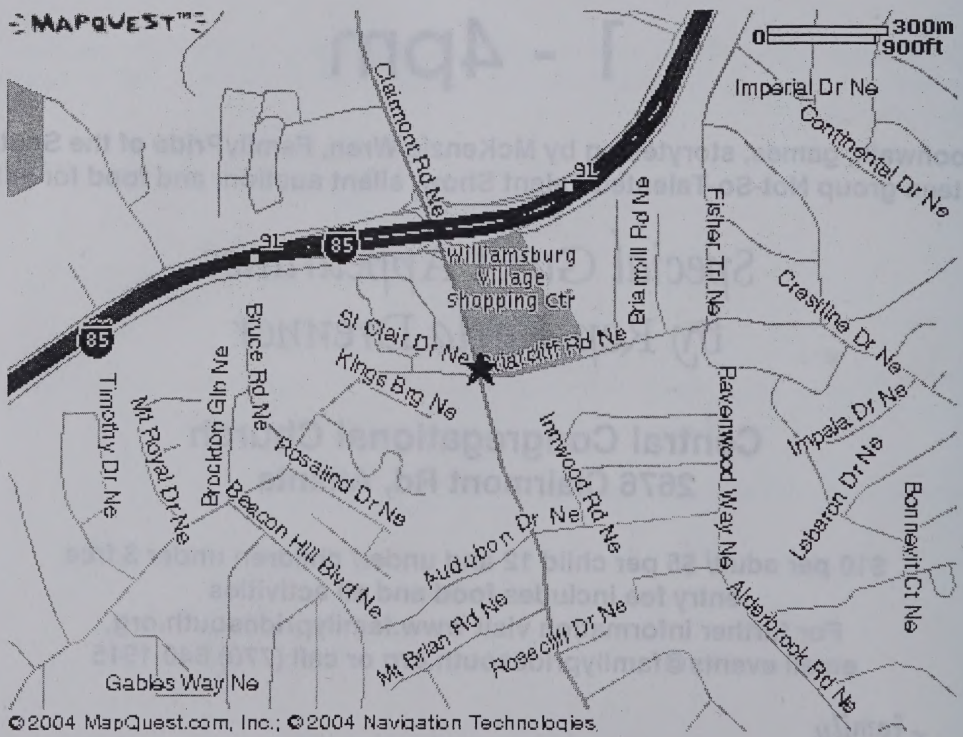
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Mt Royal Dr Ne
Rosalind Dr Ne
Beacon Hill Blvd Ne
Audubon Dr Ne
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Impala Dr Ne
Lebaron Dr Ne
Bonnevit Ct Ne
Aldenbrook Rd Ne
Mt Brian Rd Ne
Rosecliff Dr Ne
Gables Way Ne
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GA LGBT Council

Working Smarter Together

Action Items and Wish List from Meeting – March 5, 2004

1. LGBT Council – ***Carla Corley***
    a. Communication System – **GA_LGBTCouncil@yahoogroups.com**
    b. Identify Potential Prospects
    c. Establish Quarterly Meetings – Next one to be held ***May 18th at 6pm***.
        i. Donna N to see if we could use the community room at Positive Impact.
        ii. Have an education session at each meeting on each organization
    d. Mission Stmt – Our mission is to work smarter by coming together collectively to expand and enhance the capacities of organizations serving the LGBT community.
2. Centralized Self-Updating System on the Internet – ***Bonnie Barton***
    a. To establish centralized system where there is an updateable
        i. Master Calendar
        ii. List Serve
            1. LGBT Organizations and Contacts
            2. Executive Directors
            3. Presidents and/or Chairs
    b. Details: Find Hosting. Establish Login/Password. Possible contact is Cindy Abel or Greg Pearce.
3. Board Recruiting (VIP Program) – ***Carla Corley / Cherry Spencer-Stark***
    a. Establish Program to Recruit people to participate on boards
    b. Details: Model after VIP Program. Use SOVO to advertise. Get a speaker to outline the requirements. Plan for National Coming Out Week in October. Possibly have 2 stage transition with the AGLCC conference in November as another possibility.
4. Collective Community Profile / Demographic – "Who do we serve" – ***Donna Narducci***
    a. This would collectively identify the demographics we serve not only to help us tailor programs, but to help in negotiation of sponsorships as well as political efforts.
    b. Details: Donna to send out email to leaders to share surveymonkey.com or something similar to have their groups fill this out.
    c. Details: Donna to collect each organizations demographics and create master list.
5. Out and Active / SOVO participation (Stories, Profiles, Inserts) for educating community on different organizations – ***Donna Narducci / Glen Paul Freedman***
    a. This would be to establish some medium of educating the community on the different organizations in town.
6. Program to identify and recruit college interns for assistance – ***Teresa Joyce***
    a. This helps organize a recruiting effort for college interns.
    b. Details: Kennesaw to hold an event in April. Teresa Joyce to collect forms from those interested.
    c. Details: Collect Organizations requests for Interns and when needed.
7. Cross Promotion / Community Sponsorships – ***Carla Corley***

GA LGBT Council

Working Smarter Together

Action Items and Wish List from Meeting – March 5, 2004

a. Need to combat competitive feeling. ED's, Presidents and Chairs must work together to build relationships across organizations. Establish incentives.
b. Identify areas where this has worked and "advertise" to group to encourage participation.

8. Identify Associations where it is beneficial for LGBT organizations to join, ie GA Shares - ***Edward Gray***

a. This would be to collectively review organizations that are beneficial to join.
b. Details: Establish List
c. Details: Invite to Upcoming Council Meetings for Presentations

9. Organization Education / Information
10. Shared Resources or Mentoring for Intellectual Knowledge or Technology
11. Shared Employees / Resources
12. Combined Purchasing Power
    a. List of Potential Meeting Places
13. Ambassador Program
14. Alert System for "Hot" Issues
15. Business Volunteers for LGBT Community
16. Ongoing Professional Development – "How to be a board member, etc"
17. Media Training

Diversity for Social Justice Training, 2004

HOMEWORK ASSIGNMENT

Select a scenario that you would find the most challenging. Please carry out this assignment on Wednesday, August 25, 2004.

Solidarity

could find the

If you identify as a heterosexual, lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender person, locate and buy a newspaper or magazine dealing with gay, lesbian, bisexual or transgender issues. Examples include The Advocate, Curve, Out, Venus (all national magazines), or local publications such as Southern Voice, David, Out & Active, etc. Read the publication in public, carry it home unwrapped, leave it in plain sight in your home.

If you are heterosexual and involved in a relationship with a person of the opposite sex, try to keep your relationship "closeted" for a day. This means you cannot have any physical contact with the person in public, and you must be very careful about whether and where you are seen together. You cannot discuss this person or the fact that you are in a relationship to anyone (for example coworkers or acquaintances), and no one should see or overhear you on the phone with your lover. If you have been given a ring by your mate, please remove it and do not wear it in public.

If you identify as a heterosexual, lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender person; challenge any homophobic jokes or comments you hear, whether they are directed at you, another person or a general statement.

Doctors
Social Workers

last to come out to
Safety
NASW

National Gay + Lesbian Journalist Conference

*This exercise was adapted from the Cornell University ZAPS: Workshops of the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual Coalition, Ithaca, NY.

MSW

Parents

Institutionalized

Systemic

shame around poverty

26. If you never had to wait in the rain or snow for a specially build accessible bus or van, **move forward.**

27. If you have ever been told that your religion or spiritual belief was strange, primitive, heathen, or just plain wrong, **move back.**

28. If you can easily find a birthday, Valentine's day, Mother's Day or sympathy card picturing people of your skin color, **move forward.**

29. If the safety or well being of any child in your life was ever questioned because of your sexual orientation, **move back**.

30. If you have ever lost a job, a promotion because you had to take considerable time off work to care for a sick child or parent, move back.

31. If, as child, you were never told you must dress or act in a proper way, because it reflected on your whole race, **move forward.**

32. If you have ever been asked if you were the secretary, maid, housekeeper, janitor or some other subordinate job, when you were the boss or homeowner, **move back.**

33. If you needed braces as a child but you did not get them, **move back.**

34. If your religious holidays are regularly recognized by the GSU calendar, **move forward.**

35. If you have ever been stopped or questioned by police or other people about your presence in a particular neighborhood, **move back**.

36. If you were denied a job or promotion because of your gender, move **back**.

37. If your gender group has ever been considered by scientists as "inferior" **move one space back.**

38. If you never had to wonder if you were hired to meet an affirmative action goal, **move forward**.

by teachers or guidance counselors, move **back**.

12. If one or both your parent or parents completed college, move **forward**.

13. If you have spent one year or more without health insurance, move **back.**

14. If you can easily find a birthday, Valentine's Day, Mother's day or sympathy card picturing people of your sexual orientation, move one space **forward.**

15. If you were ever told by a doctor or other health care worker, that your illness was " all in your head," move one space **back.**

16. If you have been never been harassed or disrespected by police because of your race, **move forward.**

~~17. If your parent(s) celebrate your love relationship, **move forward.**~~

18. If one or both of your parents never completed high school, **move back.**

~~19. If you can easily find hair care products, skin care products and bandaids to suit your skin color and hair, **move forward.**~~

20. If you never have to consider the gender to the pronouns you ~~cue~~ use to refer to your life partner, **move forward.**

21. If you read thoroughly about the history of your race in K-12 school books, **move forward.**

22. If neither you nor your parents had to spend any amount of time on public assistance, **move forward.**

~~23. If you do not have to ask if your hotel room is equipped with flashing lights and bed vibrator signals for the smoke detector and telephone, **move forward.**~~

24. If as a child, you were discouraged from being physically active in sports, outdoor activities, and competition, **move back.**

25. If you, as a child, were ever told you were dirty, shouldn't touch someone's food, or drink from the same glass, because of your skin color, **move back.**

INSTRUCTIONS

Make sure everyone is there for the instructions. People joining after the exercise has begun is confusing and reduces the impact of the exercise.

❶ Ask the group to line up side by side in one line across the room. Have them face you and the flat wall or sidewalk behind you. There should be about equal space in front as behind them.

❷ Instruct folks to offer respect to one another by remaining silent during the exercise. (You will have to repeat this often.)

❸ Tell the group you are going to read a series of statements about life experiences. After each one you will instruct them to move either backward or forward depending on their experience.
- ➥ Since "stepping" is something only people who walk do, try saying "move one space forward," rather than "take one step forward." This phrasing is less ableist and more affirming to people who use wheelchairs.
- ➥ At this point you should illustrate the size of the step/move participants should take each time. Determine this by the size of the room and the number of statements you're going to read. You don't want half the room nose-to-the-wall after only a few statements.

❹ If a statement is not heard clearly, anyone can ask for "repeat."

❺ Ask the group to hold the hands of the people next to them, and to keep holding hands as long as they can. If someone in the group uses a wheelchair or a walker, be sure the people on either side of her/him figure out how to keep physical contact. You may tell folks here that at some point they may have to let go. Later in the exercise, you may have to remind folks to let go rather than risk falling down.

❻ Read the statements. Use the statements on the following pages or write your own. you have selected for this group and design. (race and class, gender and race, etc.)

❼ When you finish all statements, pause. Ask the group to remain where they are. Drop hands and look around. Ask them to note where they are, where their friends are.

❽ Tell the group, "On my count of three, race to this wall." (wall, line, sidewalk, whatever is behind you.)
- ➥ You may begin to count immediately, leaving no time to really think about what you asked. Or you may wait a few seconds before you start the count and note how some people prepare for the "race."

LEVEL PLAYING FIELD

CONTENT OBJECTIVES

- To amplify the definition of both oppression and privilege with common examples.
- To increase awareness and sensitivity to the realities of oppression and privilege.
- To illustrate our own and others' mixed experience of oppression and privilege.
- To demonstrate graphically that the "playing field" is not yet level.

PROCESS OBJECTIVES

- To provide physical movement and a lasting visual image.
- To challenge and reduce feelings of guilt, blame and denial regarding the experience of oppression and / or privilege.
- To cultivate stronger bonds among participants.

TIME REQUIRED

- Forming the line and giving instructions: 5 minutes
- The exercise: 6 - 12 minutes depending on number of statements. Include a few minutes for bringing chairs back in the space.
- Process: 20 - 30 minutes
- Total time: Plan an hour

MATERIALS NEEDED AND OTHER LOGISTICS

- This exercise works in any large open space. You can use a wide hallway, the foyer to an auditorium, a gym, or an outdoor space if time and weather allow. There needs to be an unobstructed wall, sidewalk or other "wall" for the "race." (Of course, if there are obstructions, they can be added to the metaphor during the processing!)
- Participants need to have their hands free.
- This is a good exercise first thing in the morning or after a break, when you have had time to clear chairs, etc. from the space.
- Before the exercise consider any movement / support needs of all participants. People will be standing or using wheelchairs for 6 - 12 minutes.

39. If your fitness as a parent has never been questioned because of your income, education, work or welfare status, **move forward.**

40. If your relatives of any generation were forced to leave ancestral lands, **move back**.

41. If you had a relative of any generation who was lynched, **move back.**

42. If you have never had to hand a grocery store cashier food stamps for your food, **move forward.**

43. If you have been never been followed by the security guard in a store, *move forward*.

44. If, when you were growing up, you were regularly told you couldn't eat all the milk or food you wanted because there was not enough, **move back**.

45. If, when you were growing up, you were regularly told you couldn't eat all the milk or food you wanted because there was not enough, **move back.**

46. If you or a relative has ever been imprisoned, **move back.**

47. If you have an immediate family member who is a doctor, lawyer, professor or other "professional," **move forward.**

48. If, as a child, you vacationed outside the U. S., **move forward.**

49. If you have ever owned a car, **move forward.**

50. If you have seen the owner of a purse (or other valuable) close it, move it or clutch it tighter when you approached, **move back**.

Atlan
over

southern voice

Please Recycle

ALL THE NEWS FOR YOUR *LIFE*. AND YOUR *STYLE*.

APRIL 1/1999

ORIGINAL PHOTOS BY CINDY SPROUL

Georgia youth rally for Unity Above Hate

'Equality Begins At Home' winds down; Atlanta police kick out gay visitors, but chief promises future presence

by PAIGE PARVIN

More than 200 people, including many proud gay teens, marched from the Capitol to Woodruff Park last Saturday, watched over by uniformed security policemen, calling for an end to hatred against gays.

The one-mile Unity Above Hate March, the Atlanta finale of a week-long national gay rights event called Equality Begins at Home, was oddly representative of the peaks—and valleys—organizers have experienced since planning began last year, including a visitation program at Atlanta police roll calls that was abruptly called off by the city and then tentatively rescheduled.

YouthPride takes to streets

Members of YouthPride, the gay youth advocacy group responsible for planning the Unity Above Hate march and rally, were flushed with sun and success on Saturday as Atlanta activists and visitors from around the South came together in support of young gays and lesbians.

➢ Continued on Page 27

➢ Continued from Page 1

"When I saw there really were people here, I almost fell over, I was so happy," said Wendy Darling, an organizer for the event.

"It was so cool to see the whole thing come to life," agreed Lela Chapman. "We were kind of sitting back and thinking, Wow, we could do anything!"

Rebecca Isaacs, policy director at the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force, EBAH's national sponsor, used the occasion to repeat a call for laws that promote a safe environment for gay Americans.

"Twenty-one states have laws against hate crimes," she said, "and Georgia is not one of them. In the 21st century, we will be stronger and more organized. ... We have got to pass this law."

southern voice

Judy Shepard, mother of murdered gay college student Matthew Shepard, blasted Congress for killing the Hate Crimes Prevention Act last week. Page 26

Philip Seymour Hoffman talks about what he learned while researching his role as a pre-op transsexual (played opposite Robert DeNiro) in the new film 'Flawless.' Page 41

Volume 12, Issue 41 ALL THE NEWS FOR YOUR *LIFE*. AND YOUR *STYLE*. NOVEMBER 25/1999

YouthPride receives national youth advocacy award

'Anti-conference' participants take home Youth Advocacy Award for YouthPride's 'commitment to vision, leadership'

by AINSLEY WAKEN

In recognition of an active year that included organizing a rally that drew more than 200, the youth and staff of YouthPride were awarded the Youth Advocacy Award last month by a national gay youth activist organization.

The National Youth Advocacy Coalition presented the award for YouthPride's "commitment to vision, leadership and providing excellent services and a sense of community for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender youth."

"YouthPride won the award for several things," said Executive Director Linda Ellis, "for being recognized for opening our YouthPride center, for working to build a GLBT youth community here in Atlanta and, in large part, for the Unity Above Hate March that the youth themselves created and sponsored this past March."

NYAC supports a network of local organizations across the country that focus on issues relevant to gay and questioning youth. NYAC hosts regional and national summits for education and support; the award ceremony was held last month at the end of the group's third annual national summit in Washington, D.C.

"It's an amazing honor," said Asha Leong, YouthPride's program director. "NYAC is a coalition of over 300 national organizations, and it really points to us and lets us know that we've been doing good work, that we've been doing the right thing and making good decisions along the way."

The Youth Advocacy Award is NYAC's highest honor, according to Leong, and was received by nine YouthPride youth who were able to attend the summit, several of whom received scholarships from YouthPride that made their attendance possible.

"It was a really incredible experience," said Amanda Kind, a YouthPride member who attended the summit. "None of us knew that we were getting the award and it was just an excellent experience."

The summit itself is referred to as an "anti-conference," Leong said, because of its relaxed structure with topic facilitators as opposed to the presentations that are the core of most conferences.

"They call it an anti-conference because it's not like it is completely set with presenters where you come in and they present to you," said Leong. "It kind of brings those conversations at conferences that usually happen in the hallways and brings them into the room and gives them a space to happen. So it's really a unique experience and very youth friendly in focus."

The summit claims more than 60 percent youth participation, and conference attendee Akeya Works said not only were the people in their late teens and early 20s present, but a large number of attendees were very young adolescents.

"There were a lot of younger people there," said Works. "I mean young like 13, 14, 15. It was really, really nice."

For YouthPride members who were able to attend the conference, and even for those who were unable to be there, the fact that their organization was recognized as a national model for youth activism was both an honor and encouragement for the continuation of their work.

"I think for those of us who are involved in planning and everyone in the organization, it's just a big acknowledgment that we're doing the right thing; we're heading in the right direction," said YouthPride member John Badger. "I think it's awesome that they give it to youth organizations who are really making an effort to make some change."

YouthPride members receive their Youth Advocacy Award. Pictured (left to right) are Sarah Austin, Kevin Pratt, Jen Hoagland, Amanda King, National Youth Advocacy Coalition Executive Director Rea Cary, David Newton and Brandon Reynolds.

INFO

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southern voice

ALL THE NEWS FOR YOUR *LIFE*. AND YOUR *STYLE*. OCTOBER 21/1999

Please Recycle

Neil Tennant (left) of Pet Shop Boys tells how their new CD celebrates the ecstasy and agony of 'Nightlife.' The Boys play Atlanta's Tabernacle Oct. 23. Page 41

Co-owner Sara Look was just a baby feminist when Charis Books & More opened 25 years ago. A 10-day anniversary celebration begins next week. Page 5

The changing face of YouthPride

Moving beyond the usual cliques common to teen life, Atlanta's gay youth organization struggles with diversity issues that confound many adults

by LAURA BROWN

When members of YouthPride, Atlanta's only organization focusing entirely on serving gay youth, organized a rally in downtown Atlanta last spring, media cameras captured a lot of similar snapshots—radical hairstyles and piercings appeared in frame after frame, reflecting many attendees' proudly "alternative" stands.

Those images may have left some wondering whether YouthPride could attract Atlanta area teens more susceptible to peer pressure, trapped by conflicting desires to "fit in" and to understand and accept being gay.

But YouthPride leaders and members are quick to dispel the idea that the organization—whose motto is "Because no one should grow up invisible or alone"—welcomes mostly one type of young people.

The similar appearances among some YouthPride members, YouthPride Executive Director Linda Ellis said, may be related just as much to popular teen styles as making a statement.

"If you are going to look at people who have dyed hair and various piercings, ... you are going to see a lot of that at YouthPride, but I think it is pretty representative of a large spectrum of the popula-

➤ Continued on Page 30

The changing face of YouthPride

➢ Continued from Page 1

tion," Ellis said. "If that is what catches your attention, then yes, you are going to see it at YouthPride, but then I saw a lot of that at church on Sunday too."

None of the youth who responded to a broad-based call to be interviewed by *Southern Voice* fit what they dubbed the "purple-haired, piercings" category, but all said they felt welcomed in the organization. Just because youth who fit that category are included, they said, doesn't mean that other people are left out.

Ranging in age from 19 to 22, the seven young people included a mixture of new and old members, as well as students and those no longer in school. In a conversation punctuated by the easy laughter common among friends, they both defended their peers' right to express themselves, and simultaneously insisted that the group encompasses a broad range of youth.

"There are enough things to fight against—why fight against each other?" asked John Badger, 20. "What difference does it make if you have purple hair and a nose ring? ... What is wrong with it? Those people need support just as much as me."

YouthPride includes a wide range of people, "whatever your background, jocks, preps or whatever," said Mark Buchanan, a 19-year-old from Chamblee who asked to be identified only by his first and middle names.

The experience of being gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgendered or questioning—shortened to "GLBTQ" in YouthPride lingo—gives members common ground across their differences, said Kevin Pratt, also 19, from Stockbridge.

"When we run out of things to talk about, we have things like coming out stories we can always come back to," Pratt said.

But while embracing members across personal styles may not be the issue within YouthPride it could appear from the outside, group members acknowledged the organization faces ongoing struggles about diversity and identity issues.

Moving beyond the usual cliques common to teen life, the members of Atlanta's gay youth organization say they are in the midst of facing issues related to race and gender that confound many adults.

YouthPride's increasing racial diversity—the seven youth interviewed included three Caucasians, three African-Americans and one Asian-Pacific Islander—has sparked on-going, often heated discussions in the organization's Wednesday night group meetings, while concerns from smaller numbers of young female attendees prompted the creation of a separate women's support group.

"Gay men tend to come out more, and I would love to see more women come to YouthPride," said Akeya Works, 22, a senior at Georgia State University and the only woman among the interview group.

Still, Works said, her approach is "if you see something homogenous, just get involved and don't go away."

According to Ellis, that willingness to keep coming and participating in YouthPride—even when discussions about race and gender may be uncomfortable and upsetting, and other members might look different from you—can provide a model for adults who have simply decided to split up into separate organizations.

"People always say that our youth are the leaders of tomorrow, but I don't think that's true," Ellis said. "I don't think we need to wait five or 10 years—these youth are leaders today."

A 'storming' organization

Ellis describes the current struggles at YouthPride as "storming," a term from group development theory that describes how "there is a stage in any group where you go through a storming time, as you are working out your norms."

When YouthPride began in 1995, Ellis said, the organization existed as a support group attended mainly by students from Paideia, an Atlanta private school with a progressive reputation.

Information about the group spread mainly by word-of-mouth, and especially because the support group had to move between borrowed spaces, "that kept us pretty homogenous," Ellis said.

She described the first YouthPride members as "predominately white," and having the financial means for transportation to YouthPride meetings, which weren't always easily accessible by MARTA.

In those first support group meetings, sexual orientation was at the middle of every conversation, Ellis said.

"Even if there were differences, the issue of talking openly [about being gay] was new, and that kept sexual orientation or identity central to what was going on," she said.

When YouthPride moved into its permanent center in June 1998, "we knew things would change, but we didn't know how," Ellis said.

C.J. PARKER

YouthPride members Kevin Pratt (left) and Andy Van Dyke said they believe everyone is welcomed at the organization, even as YouthPride struggles to address issues of race and gender.

The center, intentionally located within two blocks of a MARTA station, attracted a more diverse group of youth, and in the last year, a "core community" of about 30-50 young people has evolved around the center.

But as those core members became more comfortable with their sexual orientation, and as gay issues began to be addressed at least somewhat more openly in some schools and other institutions, the discussions at YouthPride changed, Ellis said.

"We have a growing community of youth who have dealt with the first stages of coming out, and sexual orientation or gender identity are not as primary, because they have integrated it into who they are," she explained. "Without that central focus, they now have other things they want to talk about, and they are aware of their differences now more than ever before."

The youth agreed with Ellis' assessment. "We are struggling with a lot of diversity issues right now in the organization, and we are really trying to broaden our horizons and attract more of a diverse group of people," Badger said.

YouthPride is "like a shrunken-down society," said Andy Van Dyke, 22, a graduate student at Georgia State. "There are some people who have no problems intermingling and there are those who group off—not just white men, but black men, lesbians. ... I would love to see it improve, but it is not a problem caused by YouthPride."

Franklin Robison, 20 and Asian-American, said some people at the support group he attended at the Atlanta Gay & Lesbian Center thought of YouthPride as "very upper middle class and white.'

"I felt like maybe I wouldn't fit in over here, but I was totally welcomed," said Robison, who now works as a program associate planning events for YouthPride.

At this point, how the organization's "storming" over race and gender will be resolved remains unknown—Ellis said YouthPride's adult leaders view their role as providing the space and addressing financial, liability and administrative issues, while leaving the direction of YouthPride in many ways up to the youth, "because it is their organization."

A support/discussion group for women has already started, and a men's group and group for people of color are also being discussed. Still, the separate meeting groups have drawn a mixed reaction from YouthPride members.

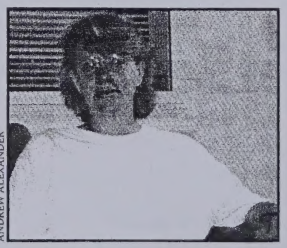
"If we break into little groups to make everyone feel comfortable, there'll be no togetherness," said Robison, explaining that he doesn't want YouthPride members to have to "pick from a menu board when they walk in the door."

While he understands the need for separate groups, Robison said he wants the Wednesday night general groups to continue because "there needs to be a common space for everyone."

That desire for common space, say the youth who were interviewed, is part of what has kept them coming to YouthPride even when the group is dealing with difficult issues.

"We have communal feelings with each other, and we don't want to see it go away," Robison said.

"We're all struggling for the same purpose, and there is strength in unity," added Ray Noe, 20.



ANDREW ALEXANDER

Adult organizations can learn a lot from YouthPride members' willingness to stick together despite differences, said Linda Ellis, executive director

Reaching out to new members

Yet even while YouthPride's "core community" struggles to deal with differences, the organization also faces another challenge: reaching out to new members and making them feel welcome—a challenge sometimes made more difficult in a "stormy" environment.

Some youth whose first visit to a YouthPride support group involved a heat-

➢ Continued on Page 31

INFO

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call: 404-223-6780
Helpline: 404-223-6789
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Weekly meetings:

Tuesdays
- Young Adult (18-24) Support Group: 8 p.m -9:30 p.m.

Wednesdays
- Teen (13-18) Support Group: 6 p.m - 7:30 p.m.
- Youth Council (13-24): 7:30 - 8:30 p.m.
- Young Adult (18-24) Social/Discussion Group: 8:30 p.m. -10 p.m.

Thursdays
- Womyn's Group: 8:30 p.m. - 10 p.m.
- Drop-In and Helpline: 6 p.m. - 10 p.m.

Fridays:
- Drop-in and Helpline: 6 p.m. - Midnight

The changing face of YouthPride

➢ Continued from Page 30

ed debate about race or gender may not have returned, Ellis acknowledged.

"I think there are some people who come and don't feel comfortable and leave and don't come back, and I think the two problems [of people not coming back and the struggles with diversity] are very interrelated," Badger agreed.

Others who stay in YouthPride for only a short time may have simply found what they needed and moved on, Works said.

"A lot of people drift in and out—they come to meet other people, to find out they're not alone, to meet a new boyfriend—and then it's like mission accomplished, and they leave," she said. "They don't want to be active—they come, get what they need, and go."

Both approaches to the group are acceptable, Ellis said. "There are some youth who deal with their issues and move on and form their community somewhere else, and that is appropriate. And there are some youth who, as YouthPride has become more of a youth center, have chosen to form their community here, and that is also appropriate," she said.

So how does YouthPride balance between the needs of youth already involved in the organization, and the need to reach other youth?

"I think part of what we are struggling with right now is trying to figure out where the emphasis is, and what is appropriate," Ellis said. "It gets back to the issue of trying to be all things for everybody, and it's part of what we are working on and what we are struggling with, and I don't have an answer."

A variety of factors outside of YouthPride's direct control also add to the difficulty of reaching out to gay youth, Ellis continued.

"Unfortunately, there are a lot of youth who could greatly benefit from services or support groups or programs similar to YouthPride, and they are the very ones not able to get there, most closely related to reactions or fear of reactions from parents," she said.

Ellis said YouthPride's extensive website offers one source of information to those young people, while posters that YouthPride recently completed and hopes to distribute to school counselors will also help raise awareness of the group.

"We are learning and exploring what it means to have a stronger presence in the schools, and my experience is that for some youth, just seeing a rainbow flag or a pink triangle that says this person is a safe space provides a support venue, even if they don't go in the door," she said. "I've had conversations with folks [later, after they came to YouthPride] who said they found support in just knowing we existed."

Ellis said YouthPride will soon send a letter to metro area middle school and high school counselors, describing YouthPride and offering to send them copies of the poster. Because only a few school counselors responded to a survey previously distributed, Ellis said YouthPride won't simply mail the poster to all counselors.

"We haven't been able to track our success with school counselors, ... and we don't have the money to distribute the posters to have them end up in the trash can," she said.

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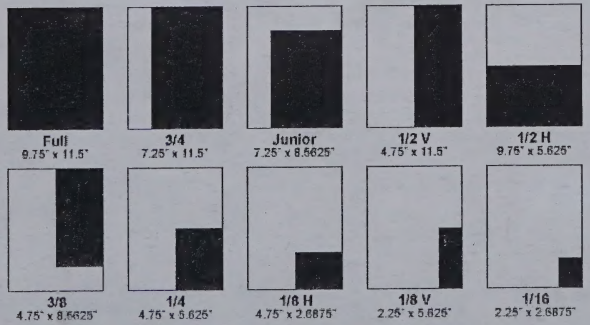

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